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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

SATURDAY, February 18, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "KITCHEN FIGURES." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations U.S.D.A.

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The news today is figures--kitchen figures to help you keep your figure. Did you ever consider that many a woman has lost her figure in the kitchen? That kitchens may be responsible for stooped shoulders, bulging waistlines, crooked backs, and even fallen arches? Just consider what 6 hours a day 365 days a year for 20 years or so can do to a figure bent over a low sink, work table, wash tub or ironing board. Or think what can happen just to feet that trudge miles every day in a poorly arranged kitchen where the stove is too far from the sink, and the sink is too far from the cupboard, and so on. American homes probably have far more poorly arranged kitchens than comfortable kitchens. And farm kitchens are some of the worst offenders because they are large and women spend more time in them.

But kitchen reformers are hard at work trying to remedy this situation. And recently one of them -- Maude Wilson of the Oregon State Experiment Station has published some figures of interest to any housewife. Miss Wilson first made a study of comfortable working heights. You may remember hearing about that study. Evelyn Roberts of the Washington Station cooperated. Together they figured out the comfortable heights for stove and sink and kitchen table and so on for the average farm housewife of the Northwest. Then, last year Maude Wilson went into a number of farm homes in her State to find out what arrangements and dimensions make the best farm kitchen.

I'm going to give you today a few of Miss Wilson's most helpful kitchen figures.

If you are 5 feet, 4 or 5 inches tall, which Miss Wilson learned was average height for Northwest housewives, you will find dishwashing easiest if the bottom of your sink is 32 and a half inches from the floor. You will beat eggs and mix cake and muffins comfortably if your working table is also about 32 inches from the floor. And you'll do the family ironing with the least strain if your ironing board is the same height as the bottom of your sink and as the top of your mixing table. But you'll roll out pie crust most conveniently if your bread-board is 33 and a half inches from the floor. And when you cut out the family's spring clothes, you'll want the cutting table 35 and a half inches from the floor. It's like this: When you are dishwashing or peeling vegetables, or mixing in a low bowl, or ironing, you need a working level several inches lower than when you are rolling out pie crust or cutting out a dress pattern.

After her recent study of farm kitchens in Oregon, Miss Wilson published interesting figures on kitchen dimensions. To take care of dishwashing, preparing vegetables and all the other jobs done at the kitchen sink, she found that the sink, drainboards and counter space on either side, with cupboards above and below

the drainboards, should total at least 8 feet 2 inches in length. This allows for a 32-inch flat-rimmed sink with counter space of 32 inches in the left side and 36 inches on the right side. Cabinets above and below these counters hold dishes and the equipment you use at the sink.

Near the sink is the mixing center where you make bread and cake, cookies and pies, salad dressing and everything else that requires mixing. A table 25 by 36 inches is the smallest allowance for convenience at this center. Beside the table, you'll need a floor-to-ceiling cabinet measuring 20 inches deep and 26 inches wide to take care of supplies and equipment.

Then there's the stove center. The stove should be within handy reach of both sink and mixing table. Beside the stove Miss Wilson suggests a floor-to-ceiling cabinet at least 15 inches wide for frying pans, kettles, lids, salt and pepper shakers, and the other things you need to use at the stove. If you have a wood stove, as so many farm housewives have, then a better arrangement is a wider cabinet with a space at the bottom to hold wood and kindling and shorter shelves above for pots and pans.

As to the size of the kitchen itself, the minimum allowance for convenience is from 115 square feet to 209 square feet, depending on what you must have in the kitchen. A kitchen that has an electric-and-wood range as well as a meal table for the family naturally must be larger than the kitchen having only an electric or gas stove and no meal table. The kitchen with the large stove or with two stoves as well as a dining table is not convenient if it is smaller than 180 square feet, but a kitchen with only an electric range and no meal table can be 20 to 26 square feet smaller. Maybe you would like to know how many miles you'll walk in a convenient farm kitchen during the year. Around 160, says Miss Wilson. And that's several hundred miles less than in some of the inconvenient farm kitchens.

Miss Wilson found that narrow kitchens could be smaller than square kitchens and still be convenient. She also found that if the working centers--sink, stove, table and refrigerator are continuous and not broken by doors or entranceways, the kitchen can be smaller and easier to work in. In planning a kitchen, she suggests arranging all doors at one end of the room and working centers at the other end.

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